



## MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

**Meeting Date:** April 23, 2020

**Agenda Item:** Mount Haggin WMA Grassy Mountain Addition, Region 3

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 5 minutes

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**Background:** FWP proposes to purchase in fee title an approximately 244-acre parcel of private land adjacent to Mount Haggin Wildlife Management Area. The property is owned by Haddox Ventures LLC. FWP would pay the appraised value of \$658,900 using Habitat Montana and possibly other partner funds. Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has helped facilitate this project. Upon purchase, the property would be managed for its wildlife, fisheries, and recreational values as part of the Mount Haggin WMA. It would not be incorporated into any existing grazing leases. Motorized travel would be restricted to snow machine use from Dec. 2 to May 15, consistent with the adjacent portion of the WMA.

This parcel borders Mount Haggin WMA, and the recently acquired 160-acre addition to the WMA. It contributes to the ecological function of the WMA and surrounding Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. It is part of the migration pathway for mule deer and elk, connecting winter range on the west side of the Continental Divide to calving/fawning areas and summer range east of the divide. Mid-seral lodgepole forests on the property provide calving/fawning areas and elk security in the fall. Wet meadows and the associated aspen and willow stands provide year-round habitat for moose, bear, and numerous other mammals, neotropical birds, amphibians, and reptiles. Oregon Creek runs along the western portion of the property and provides suitable habitat for brook trout. The acquisition would ensure this part of Mount Haggin WMA would continue to serve the needs of wildlife, support native fish restoration, and provide public access consistent with the WMA.

**Public Involvement Process & Results:** FWP completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed action, which was released for public comment for 30 days (Dec. 3, 2019 – Jan. 2, 2020). An open house was held in Butte on Dec. 11, 2019. Legal notices were printed in the Butte *Montana Standard*, the *Anaconda Leader*, and *Helena Independent Record*. A news release was distributed to a standard list of media outlets interested in FWP Region 3 news. Copies of the EA or notification of its availability were emailed to neighboring landowners, interested parties, Region 3 headquarters and Butte Area Resource Office, and on the FWP website. Eleven comments were received; all were in support of the proposed action. A Decision Notice was released on Jan. 3, 2020, that recommended proceeding with the acquisition.

**Alternatives and Analysis:** Two alternatives were analyzed: FWP purchase this 244-acre parcel in fee-title, or not purchase it. If FWP were to pass on this opportunity, it is highly likely the property would be developed for private recreational use, potentially conflicting with habitat and recreation functions of the WMA and compromising the parcel's high conservation values.

**Agency Recommendation & Rationale:** FWP recommends the commission approve this acquisition. Purchasing this property would ensure that Mount Haggin WMA and this parcel would continue to serve the needs of wildlife and provide additional public access for hunting, fishing, and other recreation.

**Proposed Motion:** I move that the commission approve FWP's purchase of the Grassy Mountain Addition to Mount Haggin WMA.